

Protect your property for better insurance outcomes

These suggestions are just a few of the steps you can take to minimize risk and to improve the chances your home will survive in case of fire.

- Create a survivable zone around your home. Keep weeds, pine needles and debris 10 feet from your home. Clear brush back at least 150 feet. Trees should be individually spaced within a distance equal to the height of the two tallest trees around your home. Prune trees in this area to a height of 10 feet. If your home is on a slope, the “defensible space” should be larger than 150 feet below the home;
- Move firewood away from the house;
- Clean leaves and pine needles from roof and rain gutters;
- Screen and clean chimneys and incinerators;
- Keep tree branches at least 15 feet away from chimneys or stovepipes.

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The Office of the Commissioner of Securities & Insurance, Montana State Auditor, is a criminal justice agency whose primary mission is to protect Montana’s consumers through securities and insurance regulation. We work hard everyday to educate and assist the public about the wide-range of issues in insurance and securities. We are committed to ensuring fairness, transparency and access in the securities and insurance business.



Before and After the Fire

REDUCING RISK,
PROTECTING ASSETS



Homeowner
insurance tips for
preparation and
recovery

www.csi.mt.gov

Your Homeowner Insurance

Q Do you have adequate coverage on your home and home's contents?

Call your insurance agent to request a review of your homeowners' coverage. Read your policy so you are prepared to ask questions.

Q Do you have a *Personal Property Inventory Sheet*, listing the personal property you own?

The Commissioner of Securities & Insurance website has one you can download or use as a guide to create your own. Visit the website at www.csi.mt.gov, click the 'Consumer' page link to find the 'my Home' icon.

Q Do you have *Replacement Cost Coverage* or *Actual Cash Value Coverage*?

Replacement Cost (RC) is what it would cost to completely replace your house or any part of it, or replace your belongings with new items of "like kind and quality" without deduction for depreciation. Rebuilding your home could cost more or less than the "market value" of your house.

Actual Cash Value (ACV) is the repair or replacement cost of the damaged property, less depreciation, which considers its age, life expectancy and wear and tear. Actual cash value coverage pays you for the value of the damaged property at the time of the loss and may not be enough to fully repair or replace the damaged property. Both ACV and RC will be determined by the language contained in your policy of insurance.

Q Do you know where your important documents are, such as insurance policies, mortgage papers, credit cards, bank books, medication information, etc.?

If possible, keep these in a safe deposit box away from your home. Otherwise, at a minimum, store these in an easily accessible fire proof box or safe in the event you must evacuate in a hurry. When you have these papers available after a fire, it saves time dealing with your insurance company and any other involved party.

Q Do you know what to do if your home is damaged by fire?

- Begin immediately to save receipts for any expenses. These receipts are important to show the insurance company what money you have spent related to the fire loss and also to verify losses claimed on your income tax.
- Do not throw away any damaged goods until after an inventory is made and your insurance company has been notified. All damages are taken into consideration in developing your insurance claim.
- If you are considering contracting for inventory or repair services, discuss your plans with your insurance company first. It helps to have everyone on the same page.
- Give notice of your loss to your insurance agent as soon as possible.

- If you are not insured, your recovery from a fire loss is based upon your own resources and help from your community. Private organizations that may be sources of aid or information:

- American Red Cross
- Salvation Army
- Religious organizations
- Department of Social Services
- State or municipal emergency services office
- Non-profit crisis counseling centers

Q Who do you contact for restoration of your home (if not a total loss) and personal belongings?

There are companies that specialize in the restoration of fire damaged structures and personal property. Whether you or your insurer employs this type of service, be clear on who will pay. Be sure to request a cost estimate for the work. Before any company is hired, check their references.

These companies provide a range of services that may include some or all of the following:

- Securing the site against further damage;
- Estimating structural damage;
- Repairing structural damage;
- Estimating the cost to repair or replace personal property;
- Packing, transportation, and storage of household items;
- Securing appropriate cleaning or repair subcontractors;
- Storing repaired items until needed.